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THE LAUGH OF CHRIST AND OTHER ORIGINAL LINNETS

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BY
ST. CLAIRE JONES



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BOOK PLATE

THE lines of St. Claire Jones are written here
Upon Life's Page outlined in ebony
By one who feels Love's Kiss upon his ear
Where Hate & Death are passing with a leer
Mid masked Lascivians and Hetæræ
Hailing "The Christ" as "King of Tragedy."
O Prudery! This Poet slays all fear
Writing that naked Truth might reappear:—
His Book Plate printed by E. E. Grabhorn,
In form no knowing critic laughs to scorn,
Seeing "The Laugh of Christ" in joy designed,
The Virgin product of a Master mind
In Beauty's black ink carefully outlined:—

SIGNED: 1917.

Lines to Marguerite Casanges

Linnets are Verses, vital, clear and clean
With sighs and kisses flying fast between
Pauses and rests timing the lines thirteen.

THE MOON-MAID MOTHER

A Picture

FULL in the Twilight ere Astarte came
Diana brought her cradle to the sky,
Within man's sight a Mother without shame
Bearing Apollo's Infant, blind to blame
Nude like the gilded blond Boy standing by
The pretty Page watching his evil eye
Follow Salome with its bloody flame
As Herod halts behind his fleshy Dame
To watch tne jeweled Peacock-Butterfly
Flutter from black cocoon in green moonlight
Flying in nakedness across the Night
Towards Luna hanging heavy o'er the height,
A vision of desire and cold delight.

Lines to Von Stuck

Repellant Night grows dark to hide the look
Salome casts at Jesus and his book;
Where Jew stands watching Herod, the pervert,
Beyond the Grecian, nut-eyed and alert
As "Sin" peering from canvas of Von Stuck.

THE MASTER OF MIRTH

A Picture

LOVER of laughing boys and singing girls
This Jew in linen, golden girdled rare,
His white face framed in long black folds of hair
Hanging in glossy columns with soft swirls
Sweeping his ivory temples in wet curls
Darker than parted-beard, in fashion's flare
Away from lips like rose-leaves red & bare,
Drawn loose around his mouth, & mated pearls
Beneath blue changing eyes; lazuli, beryls
Or opals burning in their fiery-flare
Glistened in laughter with a tear of glee
Lighting the Way for painted Hetæræ,
MASTER OF MIRTH costumed for Comedy.

Lines to WILLIAM CHASE

In New York I have studied like a Jew
Determined to find Truth:—this much is true
You showed me how to paint with pigments fresh
Still-life and portrait:—how to rake the flesh
With handle of my paint-brush to renew
The life of paint smeared yellow, red and blue.

THE LAUGH OF CHRIST

An Impression

THE LAUGH OF CHRIST is like a spreading net
Let in a salty sea of sadness filled
By streams from melting mountains flowing yet
Into Earth's troubled Pool, Genesaret
Where blood & tears & milk together spilled
Rankle on babies, boys and girls, new killed
By soldiers, in loose seed and semen wet
Filling the Seine of Christ with freshened fret
Of sailors, actors, painters, poets, skilled,—
Killed & all washed away as Leaders willed!
Yet has the LAUGH OF JESUS not been stilled
Trilled from his mouth, a Spring of Living Water
In this "UNPRECEDENTED SPRING OF SLAUGHTER!"

Spring 1917.

Lines to ROBERT HENRI

This Laugher leaps to life when bristle brush
Flushes full mouth with breath of beauty lush
Painted by Robert Henri:—Master, paint
Before the Model on the Throne can faint
From sight of men again; or let me gush
My poetry to paint a fadeless flush.

THE BATH

A Fountain

MORE joyous than the bath in marble room,
Complete immersion in the running stream
Where shying snakes and toying turtles teem;
Or steady passage thru the swollen flume,
Far from the temple door and incense fume.
Come, little children, laugh and loudly scream,
Dance in the water with your flesh agleam.
Desert your labors on the royal tomb,
And carol back the psalm that I resume.
See how the swimming frogs and fishes gleam
In the round public pool where as in dream
Our heads are sprinkled with the locust bloom
And we are swathed in tulip tree perfume.

Lines to Myra Richards

Three Symbols waken in your Fletcher Fountain
Meaning in Art more than Sea, Sky or Mountain,
Life, Truth and Love from Mæterlinckian Lake
Dancing together where their movements make
Green Plasterene a shore of cement sand
And verdegris bronze move while figures stand
With rhythmic lines—neither could dance alone
Nor sing so joyously from silent stone.

THE WHITE CHRIST

Marble Carving

THE Prophet-Poet is no longer veiled;
Naked in crystal sight, manly detailed,
I carve him here amid his long-haired sheep,
Substantial stone; his herded flock asleep.
(The watching Woman is not nude assailed
Nor has the lie of ancient time prevailed
Upon a man of truth, that he should keep
Back weighted words that gambol free, and leap
Among the ignorant.) The Nazarene
Bathes in white marbled waters cool and clean.
My chisel chips a stone the Hebrews missed.
The Maker gave clear eyes, the Greeks insist,
To gaze on perfect bodies thus sun-kissed.

Lines to Alexis Maney

Green fire-flies glisten in the golden grass,
While mated Lovers through the garden pass
Alexis, where he stands alone and holds
His slender fingers round a silver glass.

THE WATCHING WOMAN

Iron Fountain

A watching Woman stands with running sore
Painted in crimson stream upon the shore,
Where Christ in iron fishing-boat appears
Holding his hands like shells behind his ears,
To catch the cry Jehovah heard before
This Statue stood gushing its metal gore.
The Woman stands painted with crimson smears
Streaked over foolish face with drying tears,
As The White Christ drifts by without an oar
Beyond her where the gushing waters pour
In lake around him, while his fancy steers
Him past the crimson Nude, healed while she peers
From haunted eyes pressed into molten ore.

Lines to Wayman Adams

Adams paints us today that we might live
Tomorrow, when our flesh has passed from bones,
And bodies fly through star-dust in far zones.
Brushing us with a bristle brush to give
Immortal life to Brown and Smith and Jones.

HERO SALOME

An Aesthetic Dance

IN Herod's eyes, as in a crystal glass,
Flashes the daughter of Herodias,
A virgin in her night embroideries.
A milk-white peacock thru black myrtle trees,
A priestess kneeling on the garden grass,
Watching the prophet and his students pass.
Religious dancer with oiled barencies,
Ashteroth's priestess in transparencies.
The Star of Love above Tiberias
In the glazed eyes of Herod Antipas.
Salome is the blended light of these,
Casting her various veils voluminous
Behind, above, below her, luminous.

Lines to JOHANN BERTHELSON

Herod out-Herod's Herod when you play
And show in Little Theater your gay
Red face above red costume of red King
Painted for love of paint; and when you sing
The thunder rolls to heaven from your voice,
While mortals see the lightening and rejoice,
To hear King Herod in his anger when
The tone is volumed out by Berthelsen.

THE PEACOCK SKIRT

Costume Design

BREATHE not of silken slip nor fluted cape!
Above a Peacock-skirt of broidered crepe
Salome draws a shawl in crescent curve,
Full line of beauty with the Grecian swerve
Across her breasts where Roman robe agape
Reveals beneath its ribbon of tight tape;
(In axis-band about her like a nerve
Holding a flood of garments in reserve.)
A painted Persian veil draped on the skirt,
And webs of lace that deviously divert
Sight from the silver cestus in a sheath
Of parrot-plumes, in fainted fold beneath
Her golden breasts that like canaries breathe.

Lines to Oscar Wilde

Wilde, Weaver of a loose and lurid loom,
Waits me in Art's tapestried Treasure Room
When I advance with orchidaceous bloom.

THE VEILS WITHDRAWN

A Religious Dance

THE dancer lifts a veil of dull-night hue
Revealing Psyche in transparent blue,
Weeping for Cupid hidden stiff and dead,
Her face behind a net of silver thread
With flakes of pearl and amethyst streaked thru
Like powdered tears or melting morning dew,
Falling with wilted poppies from her head,
Ash-gold beneath the parting veil of red.
Nude ruler of the Roman and the Jew,
She is a leaping infant born anew,
A sunlit flying fish, a fanning moth,
A sleeping serpent, an awakened sloth,
Her seven veils withdrawn for Ashteroth.

Lines to Aubrey Beardsley

The slender Beardsley stands against black curtain
Outlined in white—Sure Draftsman, with a certain
Air of refinement drawn out of reserve
By Vision of French Model full of verve.

THE TOILETTE

Interior Decoration

O WOMAN, I behold more than your face;
Off with the rose, let lily rise instead.
Let sun-white purity pink puff replace,
Removing tulip flush, unnatural red.
The pearl of price and beauty poets chase
The loss of one immortal line they dread.
Fold veil and silken gown into a case
Beneath the cream of warm ceraceous lace.
Take the puffed dress from hot & wearied head
Bowed low by colored tresses from the dead.
All shutters opened on the darkened place
I see you in a natural naked grace,
Against the ivory panel of your bed.

Lines to Tassula

Through hyacinths and bleeding hearts
My Grecian Wife at dawning darts
From Athens to the fruited plains,
On thru the vineyards and the grains,
Unto Janina where I see
Tassula turn and run to me.

THE KISS

An Interrogation

WHAT is that strange affinity which Art
Magnetically employs to draw the soul
From men and women striving for Life's Goal?
Their kiss unites the severed Head and Heart
Cut by the Priest of Ology apart.
Quaff of the overflowing marriage bowl,
While mated male and female voice the whole
Of Love's integral Law ere they depart.
The Soul and Body of all Truth is this:
No man so dead, but wakens at a kiss.
Ovum Ideal in metamorphosis
Each woman waits above a black abyss
Pupa Pythoness in ecdysis.

Lines to Rodin

Rodin, Detailist of Females and Males
From Youth to Age—Destroyer of details,
Holding the Bodies of Women and Men
In marble and in bronze alive again.

LE ROI DES SATURNALIAS

A Reprint

NO garment hides the Jew Promethian
Nailed naked to a knotted Roman Cross,
His perfect body staged Cyclopean
Above a Grecian chorus where men toss
In Saturnalia lewd jests across.
Silenus rampant and Lascivian
Hailing a King in song Bacchantian.
An officer enfolds the heaving groins,
And on his knees a soldier tosses coins,
To spear the heart or break the leaping loins.
An eunuch lifts a sponge perfumed and spiced,
While Hetæræ behold joy sacrificed,
Kneeling to kiss the stiff feet of the Christ.

Latin Lines to Hortense Flexner

Indulge lacrymis; tibi, Hortense, iusta dolendi
Causa: tuae primum gentis decus occidit, ingens
Pace, ingens bello, frater tuus, ardua cuius
Gloria Cæsaribus par reque et nomine magnis.

ASCENSION

An Icon

WHEN lilies rise from earth & lilacs bloom
Beside the window of my studio;
When locust-clusters break and petals blow
Round bleeding-hearts, I see the nude bridegroom
Rise from the icon centered in my room
And kiss the bride, rising from golden-glow
O'er violets, purple and white, which grow
Together wet from Nature's opened Womb.
When roses lift themselves with pure perfume
Above the open door of this Glass-House
I understand both husbandman and spouse,
Leaving the Earth which is a blossomed Tomb
Where Science stands while howitzers boom!

Easter Sunday, 1917

Lines to You

A little Greek explains my lines to you
Who think my linnets Latin or Hebrew.
American, my language, will distinguish
Me from the Irish, Indians and English.

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